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TOWARD COLLECTIVE SECURITY IN THE GULF: AN EVOLVING UNITED STATES ROLE IN SUPPORT OF THE GCC STATES

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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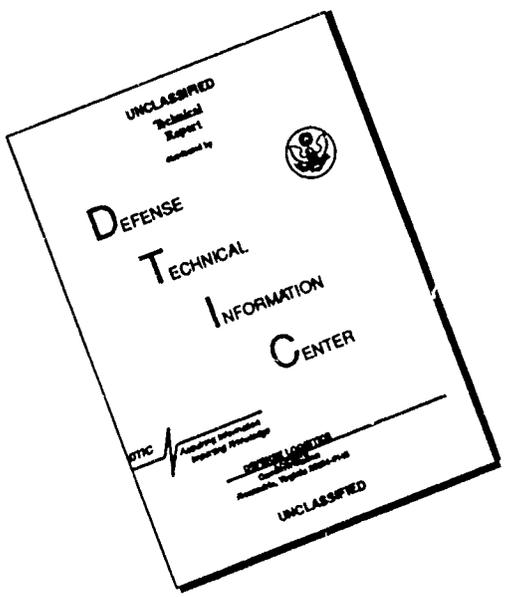

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ABSTRACT

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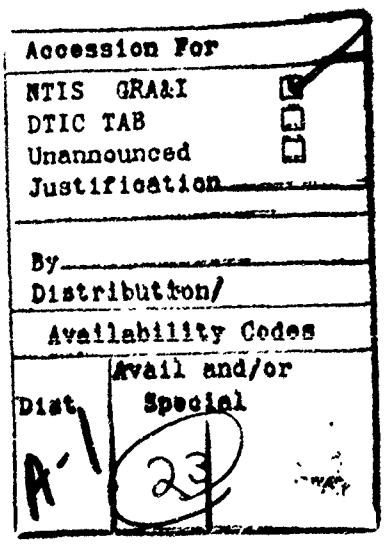

INTRODUCTION

The founding of The Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, more commonly known as the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), marked a watershed in political cooperation among the states of the Persian Gulf. Since establishment in 1981, its six member states, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Qatar, and Bahrain, have worked progressively toward mutual prosperity and security in a regional environment marked by seemingly constant turmoil; a turmoil that threatens to bring instability to the region and perhaps to the world.

The United States' role in the region, specifically with respect to the GCC, is the subject of this paper. As the challenges of the region grow, policies of the United States must be reassessed in light of enduring interests and regional objectives. Considering the potential volatility of issues now facing the GCC, it is the thesis of this paper that it is in the long term interest of the United States to seek opportunities to play an active role in construction of a framework to meet regional security issues. Cries to abandon what seem to many as the intractable problems of the Arab world will call into question the appropriate level of U.S. involvement in the area. While it is important to recognize that U.S. domestic issues

create pressures to limit involvement overseas, it is a primary position of this paper that the United States should increasingly exert its influence in the Persian Gulf.

Further, within the evolving structure of the GCC, this paper argues that a unique opportunity presently exists for expansion of U.S. influence and level of direct participation. Given the successful conclusion of the present crisis, possibilities for the U.S. to play an overt role in addressing GCC security shortfalls have never been greater. The direction and pace of this expansion must be carefully tuned to sensitivities in an Arab world long scarred by Western attempts at domination and extremely wary of interventionism.

In analyzing the alternatives available, the U.S. contribution toward the solution to the present security shortfall should be framed as a logical step in the evolution of the GCC collective framework. Expansion of U.S. involvement should focus on maintenance of an unambiguous long-term commitment to regional security, and particularly to friends within the GCC. This commitment should largely retain an "over the horizon" approach to the use of U.S. forces, while at the same time increasing the presence of U.S. naval and air forces explicitly available for reinforcement of regional ground forces. The limited ground presence implied by this expansion, e.g., U.S. Air Force units suitably tailored with multiple force and support capabilities, should be located in dispersed locations throughout the GCC in order to limit the U.S. profile in any one country.

In terms of ground combat capability, the U.S. should engage in immediate negotiations with the GCC states and with other coalition Arab governments, principally Egypt, in order to make short term improvements in GCC deterrence and defensive capabilities. The stationing of U.S. ground forces, while necessary in the immediate aftermath of the liberation of Kuwait, should be terminated as soon as practicable in order to deliver on our assurances that we entertain no interventionist intentions in the region. An aggressive level of training assistance should be maintained and periodic U.S. and regional force combined exercises should be initiated.

Collectively, these actions will dramatically improve the deterrent and defensive capabilities of forces explicitly arrayed in support of the GCC, appropriately placing responsibility for the bulk of the security requirement in regional hands.

Assumptions

It is important to discuss the salient assumptions that form a basis for the discussion which follows. First is a recognition that the uninterrupted flow of natural resources will remain central to U.S. interests for the foreseeable future. Second, while the United States cannot afford to disregard historical Soviet attempts to obtain dominant influence in the region, greatly diminished superpower competition has fundamentally altered regional politics, creating a climate conducive to the expansion of U.S. influence in the Gulf.

A third assumption is that the Gulf Cooperation Council will remain a functioning entity willing, at least, to consider

U.S. participation in the political, economic, and security affairs of the Gulf. While this may appear to be trivial from today's perspective, the status quo cannot be taken for granted given the volatile nature of the Arab world.

UNITED STATES STRATEGIC INTERESTS IN THE PERSIAN GULF

Discussion of policy options is not possible without an articulation of U.S. strategic interests in the Gulf. This foundation will facilitate the later assessment of alternative policies and their relevance to enduring interests. These interests may be categorized into three objectives: regional stability and security, economic prosperity within the region as it relates to the United States, and the special relationship with Israel. Each objective will be discussed in turn.

Stability and Security

The broadest of U.S. interests in the Gulf are stability and security. As a status-quo state in the international community, the United States is an advocate of order, rule of law, and peaceful competition among nations. In perhaps no other region of the world is this interest more challenged than in the Middle East. Regional instability may initiate either by internal or external sources. Externally, the region may be confronted by two potential threats: an attempt toward regional dominance by one of the regional powers, e.g., Iran, or invasion from a extra-regional power, i.e., the Soviet Union.

Since World War II, successive U.S. administrations have pursued stability of the Gulf with varying commitment and clarity of purpose. Since the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, however, U.S. intentions with respect to the hegemonic designs of external powers has been clear. The Carter Doctrine, enunciated on 23 January 1980, established the security of the Gulf as a vital interest.

> An attempt by any outside force to gain control of the Persian Gulf region will be regarded as an assault on the vital interests of the United States of America and such an assault will be repelled by any means necessary, including military force.[1]

At the same time it clarified U.S. intentions, the Carter Doctrine triggered the worst fears in the minds of many Arabs as it implicitly advocated a heavy-handed military approach. The events of the first half of the past decade inflamed regional sensitivities against an overt U.S. military role in regional security that were fueled by a perceived lack of U.S. support for the Palestinian cause.

Evolution from the Carter Doctrine can be traced through Department of State Special Report No. 166, July 1987, titled "U.S. Policy in the Persian Gulf." This continued the general theme that the United States would not allow the Gulf to

> come under the domination of a power hostile to the United States, our Western allies, or to our friends in the region.[2]

In the aftermath of the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, President Bush established a major corollary to the Carter Doctrine with the designation of the sovereign independence of the Kingdom of

Saudi Arabia as a vital interest of the United States. Speaking to the nation on 8 August 1990 he said,

> Let me be clear. The sovereign independence of Saudi Arabia is of vital interest to the United States. This . . . grows out of the longstanding friendship and security relationship between the United States and Saudi Arabia. US forces will work together with those of Saudi Arabia and other nations to preserve the integrity of Saudi Arabia and to stand up against Iraqi aggression.[3]

Beyond the above broadly stated objectives of policy, several important strategies have been integral to U.S. activities in the region. The first two may be categorized as military in nature, the final two more political in scope.

Militarily, the U.S. has actively promoted a long-term build up of defensive capabilities within friendly countries, using Foreign Military Sales (FMS) and military assistance. Widespread bilateral military training programs have worked to develop self-defense capability structured primarily upon U.S. systems. An important aspect of policy has been the restriction of offensive systems that destabilize the region by fuelling a conventional arms race. Of particular interest is the limitation of the spread of weapons of mass destruction and sophisticated delivery means. For example, diplomacy with Argentina regarding joint development of the Condor-2 ICBM with Iraq ended successfully in September 1990 when Argentina terminated the joint effort.[4]

The first political strategy centers around the active support for the GCC as a forum for building consensus, or *ijma*, in the Sunni Muslim tradition, among moderate Arab Gulf states. From the U.S. perspective, this is the preferred mechanism for

change. While GCC positions do not always agree with those of the U.S., it is precisely this process that insures the evolutionary change that contributes to the relative stability of the Gulf sub-region. The second political element is U.S. credibility among GCC states as a powerful and reliable friend. This element of policy was never more evident than in the decision to rapidly deploy military power to reinforce Saudi defenses in the face of Iraqi aggression.

Economic Prosperity

It is safe to say that without discovery of major oil deposits in the Persian Gulf in the years preceding World War II, U.S. interest in the Gulf would not begin to approach what it has become today. Simply stated, the principle economic interest in the region is insuring the unconstrained access to natural resources, within a free market context, for both the United States and the remainder of the world. A major military corollary has been willingness to play a important role in insuring freedom of navigation in international waters in the area. The Persian Gulf, the Straits of Hormuz and the Bab el Mandeb, the Red Sea, and the Suez Canal are individually and collectively integral to consummation of this interest.

Secondarily but of considerable importance, the United States wishes to continue to play a primary role in the economic maturation of regional economies and to encourage responsible investment in the world's free markets. Continued investment in the U.S. coupled with an increase in the flow of capital from wealthy Gulf States to non-oil producing Arab nations will

contribute to the GCC's continuing stake in the fortunes of the United States and to regional stability. Exports of defense systems represent a continuing growth opportunity for the United States. Integrated with the development of regional defensive capabilities and a balanced approach in maintaining our special relationship with Israel, the economic pieces of policy begin to synergize with other aspects.

U.S. Support for Israel

From the founding of the Jewish state in 1948, the U.S. has established a special relationship with Israel. Since the Yom Kippur War, determination to maintain Israel's strategic superiority has been both a cornerstone of U.S. policy and the principal impediment to nearly every other U.S. interest in the Gulf. Therefore, fundamental to a discussion of U.S. interests is a relationship with Israel that has clearly impacted if not dominated U.S. - GCC interaction in the past 10 years.

United States guarantees concerning the sovereignty and security of Israel form the basis of the relationship. Primary elements in the execution of this policy are high levels of military aid, notably in high technology, which sustains Israeli qualitative superiority in the region. At the same time, U.S. support for U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 implicitly limits Israeli territorial ambitions to pre-1967 boundaries. In effect, U.S. policy attempts to walk a tightrope between a commitment to the survival of Israel and a balance between the competing claims of Israel and the moderate Arabs of the GCC.

THE GULF COOPERATION COUNCIL: EVOLUTION TOWARD COLLECTIVE SECURITY

As a prelude to an examination of possible U.S. roles in meeting GCC security requirements, it is useful to examine the context within which the GCC was formed. The evolving nature of its approach to collective security in general and historical U.S. involvement in regional security in particular have created a framework within which an active U.S. role in regional security is possible.

Arab Unity, Islam, and Nationalism

A salient factor in a discussion of collective effort in the Arab world is the concept of Arab unity and a related suspicion of foreign intervention in Arab life. The origins of a pan-Arab consciousness have been traced to the pre-Islamic period in the Arabian Peninsula. Even in the beginning, the formation of loose, socio-cultural ties among Arabian tribes was given impetus by attempts at foreign domination.[5]

The birth of Islam in the 7th century added a religious zeal to the concept of a united Arab nation as expressed in a global Islamic society, or *ummah*. The idea of a single temporal leader of the Moslem community, the *Caliph*, became an important unifying force into the 20th Century.[6] The spread of Islam was an important integrating force as it provided a common Arabic language that helped overcome previous barriers. Domination by foreign powers stifled the pan-Arab movement, however, beginning in the 16th Century with Dutch and Portuguese dominance of the trading routes and followed by the *Pax Britannica* era.

In the period immediately prior to World War I, the world-wide nationalist movement began to catch hold in the Middle East, adding fuel to but at the same time forever complicating the pan-Arab movement. This head-long rush into Arab nationalism ran up against continued colonial intrigue on the part of the French and the British. It is no accident that the new polities emerging from the post-colonial period have embraced the concept of Arab unity within an over-arching notion of separate national identities and an almost fevered anti-Western perspective that has dominated Arab thinking.

The formation of the Arab League on 10 May 1945 represented the first modern formalization of the concept of an Arab nation. From its inception, primary emphasis has been on the maintenance of individual sovereignty of the newly emergent nations, protection from foreign influence and aggression, and strengthening inter-Arab relations.[7]

The other fundamental unifying movement within the Middle East is Islam. The formation of the Organization of the Islamic Conference, established under the aegis of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in 1971, adds a further element of cohesion to the nations of the region.[8]

It is in the above context that the evolution of the GCC must be viewed. While the pan-Arab movement and the integrative power of Islam must be reckoned with in a discussion of the GCC, the importance and perhaps dominance of other factors is essential to an understanding of the Gulf states as an entity.

> Contemporary uncertainty about the primary element -- leadership -- in the structure of an Islamic state is

> rooted in ambiguities 1,400 years old. The classic condition for rulership is piety. Constitutive variations on this theme . . . are rooted in a long history of sectarian cleavage, the division of the Muslim world into colonies, empires or nations, and the rise of the post-colonial nation-state with nationalism eclipsing Muslim global unity. Few subjects in Islam have been argued more vigorously and with so little consensus. The Gulf state polities do not fit comfortably into Western schema, nor should they. They must be classified and assessed in terms of their own internally generated criteria."

Genesis of the GCC

Finding overall Arab unity elusive, many Arabs looked to collectivism on a bilateral or regional level. Early attempts failed principally due to potential loss of sovereignty or fear of domination. At times, divergence in political systems or differing religious emphasis frustrated unification. While the common bonds of Islam and Arab brotherhood remain, regional and national interests have prevailed.

The states of the Gulf Cooperation Council find themselves in a fundamentally different circumstance. They are relatively isolated and historically have been able to maintain their customs and forms of government relatively free from Western influence. Common language and culture, evolving government systems, adherence to the Sunni branch of Islam, comparable petroleum-based economies, and generally equivalent standards of economic development combine to form a remarkably homogeneous perspective of the world and worthy of the distinctive label as Arabians. The region's almost unique adherence to the wear of traditional dress in the daily conduct of business is a manifestation of pride in their Arabian culture, forming a

powerful symbol of a distinctive identity.[10]

Formal discussions of cooperation among the Gulf states began in 1976. Early proposals by Oman and Kuwait differed in emphasis from one focused on regional security and defense to a proposal more comprehensive in nature. There were uncertainties as well concerning the basis of membership in such an organization, at times including and then excluding Iran and Iraq.[11]

Discussion proceeded without a sense of urgency, complicated by general distrust of Iraq and Iran and by smaller state fears that Saudi Arabia would use its size and wealth to dominate them. The differences between, and threats posed by, their larger neighbors to the north in the end set the Gulf states apart on the road to unity. The establishment of the revolutionary regime in Iran, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979, and the Iran-Iraq war in 1980, gave the GCC a set of issues of some immediacy. Following discussions between heads of state during January 1981, the issue of membership was resolved.[12] They met again in Abu Dhabi on 25 May 1981 to formally sign the GCC charter.[13]

Goals and Objectives

The Charter explicitly envisioned attainment of unity among states, but shrewdly avoided an abrupt convergence to union that may have forced members to irrationally surrender sovereignty. This engendered a freedom to evolve toward a roughly formed objective. Not totally based on ideology, the GCC states were motivated by a practical appreciation of common goals and values. The road toward unification was one of pragmatism and

deliberation.[14] Of practical importance within Arab political circles, the Charter's approach to regional issues was in conformity with and supportive of the aspirations of a larger Arab Nation as expressed by the Arab League and embodied in Islam.

In spite of security issues which were largely responsible for bringing the six together, the stated objectives of the Council were not directed towards defense and security. Article Four, Objectives of the Charter focused on "coordination, integration, interconnection between member states" in order to "achieve unity between them." It described its other basic objectives: to "deepen and strengthen links," to "formulate similar regulations," and to "stimulate scientific and technological progress."[15]

An Evolving Process Toward Collective Security

Prior to formation of the GCC, the nations of the Gulf participated in a series of joint military efforts of limited scope and duration. The predominant theme of the 1970s was the affirmation that neither superpower should play a role in regional defense nor be given access to military bases in the Gulf. The lone exception for U.S. interests was an Omani proposal in 1979 to form a Gulf security force to insure freedom of navigation through the Straits of Hormuz that urged an active role for the United States. Largely in response to widespread disaffection with the Camp David accords, Saudi Arabia rejected the proposal.[16]

Perhaps most remarkable from a Western perspective during the genesis of the GCC was the scrupulous avoidance of even a

hint of a military alliance. Yet the most troublesome issues with which the member states have had to wrestle have been those concerning defense and internal security. Perhaps not wanting to contribute toward further instability in the region given the ongoing conflict between their larger neighbors to the north, the GCC states chose to deemphasize intentions with respect to collective security. In a separate, not well publicized statement issued following the initial GCC summit in 1981, the members declared a policy of military cooperation.

> [The GCC nations] reaffirm that the region's security and stability are the responsibility of its peoples and countries and that this Council expresses the will of these countries and their right to defend their security and independence. They also affirm their absolute rejection of foreign interference in the region. . . They call for keeping the entire region free of international conflicts, particularly the presence of military fleets and foreign bases, in order to safeguard their interests.[17]

This vision for military cooperation was a victory for a Kuwaiti perspective presented during formative discussions. Oman had tabled a proposal calling for full military cooperation and "open coordination with a major friendly power whose security perceptions were close, if not identical with those of the GCC."[18] While caution and the overriding urge for consensus reigned at the close of the debate, it is clear that collective security concerns were ascendent even in the GCC's early months.

The Iran/Iraq conflict pressed the GCC forward in its evolution. U.S. Airborne Warning and Control Systems (AWACS) operating in support of the Saudis, created an opportunity for military cooperation. At the same time, U.S. contributions toward GCC security nurtured staunch opposition to U.S. presence.

From the above beginning, the GCC states have widened their level of cooperation considerably. Two examples are a series of bilateral internal security agreements between Saudi Arabia and each GCC state (except Kuwait) and a collective air defense network which is comprised of Saudi, UAE and Kuwaiti systems.[19] Perhaps more significantly, they have established a joint military command and initiated combined contingency planning. A series of joint exercises have begun to develop a combined operational capability. The primary outgrowth of the exercise program was the establishment of the GCC Strike Force in November 1984. These exercises have continued periodically. Also in November 1984, the GCC formally announced the creation of a joint "rapid deployment force" designed to deter military threats to the member states.[20] While the GCC force is largely symbolic, the increase in military cooperation indicates the extent to which the Gulf states are willing to modify their approach to thorny issues given an evolving regional threat.

Historic U.S.- GCC Interaction: An Evolving Partnership

The United States has enjoyed over 40 years of constructive cooperation with the emerging nations of the Gulf. From the World War II to the present, the relationship has evolved from one essentially economic in scope to one much more comprehensive in nature, to include a military component. In the face of some important differences, both in interests and in strategies to achieve each party's interests, there has been a significant measure of cooperation over this period. The result has been an evolution toward a relatively high degree of shared objectives

as the final decade of the 20th Century began to unfold.

Prior to formation of the GCC, the U.S. experienced a period of considerable influence in the Gulf area. During the latter part of the 1940s, preliminary regional defense contacts were made. Working initially in cooperation with Britain as the dominant military force in the Gulf, the U.S. established a naval presence, called the Middle East Force (MIDEASTFOR), and came to an agreement with Saudi Arabia to construct an air base at Dhahran.[21] The latter event initiated a continuing relationship with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers that culminated in construction management of the extensive modernization of Saudi military infrastructure in the 1970s and 1980s.

A low key but active policy of military cooperation continued into the 1950s, declining somewhat with the Saudi decision not to join the Baghdad Pact. Following the death of King Abd al Aziz ibn Saud, the reigns of Kings Saud and Faisal saw the formation of long standing Saudi policy imperatives. These imperatives were: 1) the careful maintenance of sovereign prerogatives over regional and extra-regional agreements, 2) establishment of ties with the West and the United States in particular on an over-the-horizon basis, in order to avoid potential political vulnerability in regional and inter-Arab relations, and 3) the reliance upon regional flexibility implicit in the absence of formal agreements.[22]

In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the U.S. began to rely on regional powers, principally the Shah, to shoulder the security challenges of the Gulf. A key element in the "twin

Pillars" approach, Saudi Arabia was expected to join with Iran as a bulwark against instability.

After providing defensive arms to the region for 20 years, Congress began to exert its influence in a series of successful but controversial arms sales to Saudi Arabia in 1976/77.[23] The problem was aggravated by the clear influence of the common Arab enemy: Israel. As a result, the reliability of the U.S. as a source of defensive military systems became an important question in the relationship between Washington and its Gulf allies. One overt sign of Gulf dissatisfaction was reduction in U.S. naval access to Bahraini facilities in the mid-1970s.[24]

The influx of arms into Iran and countervailing massive supply of armaments to Iraq by the Soviet Union created a regional arms race, encouraged by the superpower rivalry that the Gulf sought to avoid. The aversion to superpower involvement was exacerbated in 1979 and early 1980 with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and U.S. response in forming the Rapid Deployment Joint Task Force (RDJTF). The latter could not have avoided posing a menace to the Gulf states in the face of explicit threats by U.S. analysts to forcibly occupy oil fields should the West be denied access by a hostile force.

Insistence on formal agreements and basing privileges was insensitive to political realities. The treaty with Oman, concluded 4 June 1980, was one important exception. Omani veto rights on use of facilities helped maintain an "over-the-horizon" posture and enabled the agreement to be consummated with limited negative regional reaction.[25] Restrictions added

during the Treaty's 1985 re-negotiation limited use of facilities to operations that had explicit GCC support.[26] Sultan Qaboos has begun to back away from a close relationship with the U.S. This is reflected in the following statement made in July 1985 in response to U.S. requests for expansion of naval services available and prepositioning of equipment.

> We will never accept these bases. Our Washington friends know this well and are perfectly aware of the nature of the military facilities which we have granted them as was stipulated in the agreement signed in 1980, which will remain in force until 1990. We have no intention of amending it, still less of extending it.[27]

Immediately following Iraq's invasion of Iran in 1980, the U.S. sent four AWACS aircraft to assist Saudi Arabia defend its territory from possible escalation of that conflict. These assets remained in the Gulf for an extended period, providing an important indication of U.S. willingness to come to the GCC's assistance when called. The later AWACS sale to the Saudis further demonstrated U.S. resolve, while the sometimes bitter Congressional opposition to the sale indicated that all would not be smooth sailing, at least in Foreign Military Sales.

The threat to commercial shipping expanded in October 1983 when the French delivered five Super Etendard aircraft armed with Exocet anti-ship missiles to Iraq.[28] Escalation by both sides that threatened freedom of navigation brought a rapid U.S. response. Coincident with formation of U.S. Central Command (USCENTCOM) and increased naval/Marine presence in the Indian Ocean, a U.S. delegation representing the Departments of State and Defense visited each GCC state to offer U.S. cooperation should any attempt be made to close the Straits of Hormuz.

A similar visit in April 1984 reinforced U.S. readiness to provide military assistance if requested, explaining in the process that in-theatre facilities could provide important enhancements for U.S. air power.[29] The response from the GCC was typically ambivalent. While comfort with the "over-the-horizon" approach was evident, increasingly member states began to see the utility of expanded U.S. presence. Even recalcitrant Kuwait seemed to soften to a relationship with the United States. Kuwaiti Foreign Minister, Sheikh Sabah al-Ahmad al-Jabir, retreated substantively from the official GCC position when he said:

> First, you must know that the Gulf waters are not territorial but international, governed by international agreements. The Gulf concerns me and others because it is an artery for the countries of Europe, Asia, Japan and numerous others . . . . I do not have the right to oppose military intervention because the Gulf is international and is not a Kuwaiti, Omani, Qatari or even Arab gulf.[30]

While U.S. presence was real and cautiously on the increase, reluctance to openly embrace superpower involvement in Gulf security remained. Potential for Soviet-U.S. competition, coupled with the reduced credibility of the United States following the redeployment of the Marines from Beruit in February 1984, contributed to inertia. A GCC spokesman summed up the lesson received by many Arabs from our Beruit adventure:

> Frankly, we hope the Americans do not act in the Gulf. For the worst thing would be for them to intervene and not finish the job. That would leave us with a far bigger mess.[31]

Events in 1986 pushed the GCC toward greater superpower involvement. Responding to heightened pressure on shipping, Kuwait approached both superpowers with a proposal to re-flag its tankers in order to deter further Iranian attacks. The Soviets, followed more cautiously by the United States, agreed to the proposal. U.S. engagement with military power was limited, carefully avoiding an open ended commitment. But it certainly was on an increasing path.[32]

It is interesting to note that even as the U.S. was directly engaged in supporting GCC security through military means, Abdulla Bishara, the GCC Secretary-General, continued with clear inconsistency the standard position concerning GCC self-reliance in security matters. Speaking before the World Affairs Council in Washington on 23 September, 1986, he said:

> Our security needs can be served only by self-reliance. . . . The peninsular shield is the embodiment of our determination to protect our territory now and into the next century. We entertain no false hopes of external support, nor even the possibility of requesting such action. A call on foreign troops to help defend our territory would truly be the kiss of death for us; foreign intervention would be a prescription for disaster. If we can't defend ourselves, it is irrational for us to expect to survive as sovereign states.[33]

While many viewed the reflagging operation as a temporary response to a transitory requirement, it can be seen as step in an evolving interrelationship between states. While diminished naval presence was inevitable once the threat decreased, a willingness to formally request U.S. assistance was an important step in the evolution of a political-military relationship.

This was manifest during the crisis caused by Iraq's invasion of Kuwait in 1990. That such contingencies were

perhaps never far from Gulf leaders' strategic thinging is reflected in news reports emanating from the Gulf in late 1990. These reports characterized the extensive Saudi buildup of combat materials and infrastructure during the 70s and 80s as being deliberate overkill, implying a Saudi strategy that included the possible requirement for direct U.S. involvement in regional security.[34] Even before the invasion of Kuwait, most analysts had concluded that the ultimate defense of the Gulf required U.S. military commitment.

> the ultimate Saudi defense -- and therefore the defense of all the GCC nations -- must come from the United States, although at the direct request of the kingdom and the GCC. While the Saudis have consistently refused to allow the stationing of American military forces in the kingdom and do not cooperate with the United States in any military exercises . . . , the overstocking built into their weapons and equipment purchases strongly indicates that they recognize that full cooperation with a prompt deployment of USCENTCOM forces is necessary in the case of severe threats.[35]

A discussion of U.S.- GCC interaction is not complete without an appreciation of the impact of Palestine. The relationship was almost fatally complicated in 1967 as a consequence of Israeli occupation of Arab territory. Extensive airlift in support of Israel in 1973 seriously eroded the U.S. image in the Arab world and placed considerable doubt as to Washington's ability to deliver on its long held position as an honest broker in the dispute. While explicit support for U.N. Security Council Resolution 242 remains a cornerstone of U.S. policy, the inability, or as the Arabs see it, unwillingness, to influence substantive Israeli concessions on key issues has engendered growing cynicism.

The impact of this issue is twofold: first and most important, this problem is the preeminent issue facing the Arab nation. The occupation of East Jerusalem is a particularly deeply felt emotion. That these passions run deep in the GCC nations, despite geographic separation, is a reflection of their support for the concept of Arab unity and of their special role as the protectors of the most holy places in Islam.

A second manifestation of the issue is the large Palestinian refugee population that has been assimilated into the nations of the Gulf. Drawn to economic opportunities in the oil producing states, Palestinian populations have grown to substantial minorities, particularly in Kuwait and Saudi Arabia. The extent to which this largely disenfranchised group becomes disillusioned with the inertia confronting their quest for a homeland will determine how content they will be in their present situations.

GCC STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Threat

It is useful to examine past and present threats postured against the GCC in order to develop recommendations concerning U.S. policy alternatives. These threats may be classified as either internal or external, although overlap is inevitable.

Internal unrest has characterized the political landscape of the Middle East for some time. The GCC states have not been immune. The overthrow of Sultan Said by his son Qaboos in 1970 and the assassination of King Faisal of Saudi Arabia in 1975 by

a distant member of the Royal family are two recent examples of success in effecting change at the top. This type of incident is of immediate concern among GCC states, fueled by attempts at royal family assassination in Kuwait and Bahrain.

The Dhofar rebellion in western Oman, quelled in 1975 with the assistance of Iranian forces, illustrates another threat, partially instigated by external forces. Concerns about the potential for similar challenges to the status quo are fed by repeated unrest during the *Hajj* to Mecca in Saudi Arabia, largely initiated by Iranian pilgrims. These incidents are designed in part to undermine the authority of Saudi Arabia as the guardian of the Muslim holy places and challenge the legitimacy of the Saudi leadership.[36]

The transnational nature of the fundamentalist ideology espoused by Khomeini's Islamic Republic poses the gravest threat to internal stability. The threat was unambiguously presented by an Iranian official on 1 May 1980 in justifying Iranian attempts to promote internal unrest in Iraq.

> This could not be considered as interference in Iraqi internal affairs, since we consider the Islamic nation as one, and the Imam [Khomeini] is a religious leader. He is the leader of the Iraqi people and all Islamic peoples; as he feels responsibility for Iran, he feels responsibility for Iraq.[37]

As previously discussed as an important factor in the U.S.-GCC interrelationship, the Palestinian diaspora creates internal tensions throughout the Gulf. The explicit support given Saddam Hussein by Yassir Arafat and the Palestinian Liberation Organization will lead to a re-assessment by the GCC as to the appropriate level of support for the PLO specifically and

Palestinians in general. The backlash against Palestinians has already begun in Kuwait and may bring rise to further instability in Jordan and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Externally, much has been said of late about the greatly diminished offensive capabilities of Iran, as a consequence of its long war with Iraq, and of Iraq, following the destruction of the greater part of its Army during Desert Storm. However, there remains substantial military capability in the region. Over time, renewed offensive potential in the two largest nations of the Gulf will likely lead to a resurgence of these longstanding threats. This threat environment is likely to persist, given GCC oil wealth juxtaposed against the relative poverty and larger standing armies of its neighbors.

An analysis of likely regional conflicts, each carrying the potential to spill over into the GCC, generates considerable concern within military analysts of the Gulf. In united Yemen, complexities of their recent union, the relative lack of economic development, and the size of the standing army give rise to a number of threatening scenarios. Potential for conflict is exacerbated by an inevitable enmity toward the GCC fostered by the traditional Yemeni role as provider of much of the Gulf's manual labor. The omnipresent ethnic strife, involving minorities such as the Kurds or the Eritreans, could create conflict that could potentially boil into the affairs of the Gulf.

Syria, although presently enjoying renewed legitimacy because of support for the coalition against Iraq, has historic

expansionist views and deep seated animosities toward its neighbors. Given its significant standing army and the power vacuum created by dismemberment of Iraq's military power, fears of Syrian adventurism are understandable.

Another external threat that merits attention is posed by Israel. Given an inclination toward a pre-emptive strategy against perceived challenges to Israeli security, the GCC must consider Israel as a tangible threat. This feeling is exacerbated by the presence of Israeli nuclear and chemical weapons, which in turn led to decisions by a number of Arab states to develop similar capabilities. The presence of sophisticated delivery means, such as the Saudi acquisition of Chinese CSS-2 ballistic missiles, indicates a determination to deter an Israeli pre-emptive course of action. The resulting arms race has grave implications for long term regional stability and argue for acceptance of an arms control regime focused on weapons of mass destruction. Prospects for such an seem remote given the present unwillingness of either side to discuss the issues.

Regional Balance of Power

The imbalance between Iraq and the GCC created an opening for the opportunistic and hegemonic designs of Saddam Hussein. While the GCC Strike Force was a positive step toward collective security, it was never designed to meet the challenge presented on 2 August 1990. Considering GCC demographics alone, e.g., its supporting population base and projected population growth in the near to mid term, the requirement for external augmentation

will persist. While the promise of U.S. support will carry greater legitimacy given the legacy of Desert Storm, a visibly more potent ground combat capability, either regional or extra-regional, seems an essential ingredient in Gulf's stability. Even a cursory examination of present and projected forces available to potential adversaries indicates a long term imbalance in ground combat forces. U.S. options to address this issue are developed in the following section.

U.S. POLICY OPTIONS: PROS AND CONS

A number of U.S. alternatives are available to address regional instability and security shortfalls. The following policy options, together with a comparison of advantages and disadvantages of each, will establish the basis for a set of recommendations that will bring this paper to a conclusion.

a prelude, it is important to recognize a primary issue concerning development of U.S. strategies: whether the U.S. should adopt a diplomatically active, overt military role in regional affairs or, alternatively, pursue its interests passively, maintaining a low profile and relying upon regional players to take the initiative and assume the predominant role.

The U.S. Role: Active or Passive

The U.S. has historically assumed a largely passive role in security issues of the Gulf, moving into overt roles in isolated instances and only upon invitation of the states involved for the particular crisis at hand. Rationale for this approach is

grounded in the longstanding political realities of the region developed in preceding sections. While contingency plans are available for responding to various crises, effective U.S. response has always hinged on the major questions of base access and the demanding requirements of the strategic deployment of U.S.-based forces into theater. While this approach was satisfactory during Desert Shield given time to build up, it is not difficult to imagine an entirely different set of circumstances that would have placed tremendous stains on USCENTCOM's ability to project military power into theater, with uncertain results.

In the aftermath of Desert Storm, the basic issue facing policy makers is the appropriate scope of U.S. involvement in regional security affairs. Having taken a leading role in the world's confrontation of Saddam Hussein, many states of the Middle East now look inevitably toward the U.S. for leadership and vision. The United States can continue to address its vital interests from a distance, using an indirect approach, or begin to explore opportunities for a more active role in regional security matters. The advantages and disadvantages of this basic policy alternative will be explored in the options which follow.

Option 1: Status Quo

One alternative available is to pursue the policies in effect immediately prior to Iraq's invasion of Kuwait. U.S. policy has been characterized by an implicit, perhaps ambiguous, "over-the-horizon" commitment to Gulf security. Maritime

Prepositioning, a limited theater naval presence, and the conditional use of Omani facilities in time of crisis were the only explicit indications of USCENTCOM's ability to project military power into the region.

An important aspect of policy was reliance upon Foreign Military Sales to GCC states to enable them, over the long term, to build up their own defensive capability and hence deter aggression. Military assistance facilitated assimilation of U.S. military hardware and gradual improvement of GCC capabilities. Despite Congressional challenge to proposed arms sales to GCC states, those that were successful provided sophisticated systems that materially improved GCC defensive capabilities.

Politically, an important element of U.S. policy was to work to deny the Soviet Union the opportunity to expand its influence in regional affairs. The special relationship with Israel remained a cornerstone of U.S. policy, to the extent that no real priority was placed on effecting Israeli movement on the Palestinian issue, even in the face of continued festering of the *Intifada* in the occupied territories. Washington pursued a low key and only partially successful policy opposing introduction of weapons of mass destruction and sophisticated means of delivery into the regional military balance equation.

The above policy has several strengths. While insistence on basing rights worked against U.S. credibility, nevertheless the policy as executed avoided direct confrontation with regional political sensitivities that focused on preventing superpower competition in regional security schemes. A strategy

based upon naval presence is a low profile, reasonably low cost solution to a logistically demanding challenge of maintaining military forces at great distance from the United States.

Dependence on regional forces placed in Arab hands what many characterize as an exclusively Arab problem. As it limited the timeliness of a military response to crisis, this dependence served U.S. interests in that it gave flexibility in development of options tuned to the threats and opportunities of each crisis.

On the negative side, the present strategy accepted at least short-term risk while GCC capabilities were improving and as it relied upon extended warning time should the threat require the commitment of U.S. forces. Given the extreme distances involved and constrained strategic lift available for force projection, the build-up of any significant ground combat capability could take months. An opposing armored advance from Iraq or Iran would be completed in a matter of hours.

The denial of sales of defensive U.S. systems requested by GCC states, primarily due to internal political reasons, worked directly against U.S. influence. The extent to which GCC states were required to purchase systems from other arms sources hindered GCC progress toward effective military integration.

Many would argue that since the Carter Doctrine and formation of USCENTCOM, U.S. policy had been focused on deterrence of aggression in the Gulf. Alternatively, an uncertain force projection capability, coupled with President Reagan's early ambivalence as to U.S. intentions toward a direct

role in Gulf security, contributed to uncertainty as to the extent of the U.S. commitment. Given inconsistent attention to insuring the GCC states could adequately defend themselves, the present set of policies were insufficient to prevent the invasion of Kuwait and forced the major commitment of U.S. forces. Whether a formal arrangement with the GCC, coupled with a larger ground and/or air combat presence in theater, would have deterred Iraq is open to conjecture.

Following demonstration of U.S. resolve, a similar incident is arguably less likely. Still, a defensive capability comprised only of GCC forces, no matter how expanded, will continue to lack credibility as a deterrent. A fundamental adjustment in the security framework of the Gulf is indicated.

Option 2: Collective Security within an Alliance Structure

A second alternative is a security arrangement that explicitly links the U.S. to security structures in the GCC, bringing the member states together in principle to oppose any threat to its security. Formal linkage might explicitly permit stationing of U.S. air and ground combat forces, perhaps an armored brigade or more, thereby boosting the deterrent value of forces visibly arrayed against potential aggressors.

This would decisively demonstrate U.S. commitment to GCC defense. An overt presence in the region would facilitate the rapid expansion of U.S. forces should the threat presented exceed initial theater capability. Most importantly, a pre-crisis decision by the GCC and the United States to form an alliance would remove ambiguity as to the major issues

surrounding the use of external force in the Gulf: the willingness of the Gulf states to permit U.S. military presence and the political will of the United States to commit forces to the region.

Politically, however, this approach flies in the face of long-standing regional sensitivities that have dominated security considerations for decades. Fears directed against the imperialist ambitions of the West are exactly the type of thing from which internal instability could spring. The acceptance of an overt and dominating U.S. role could well flame discontent with the leadership of the Gulf states and eventually undermine the prevailing political legitimacy. Repeated promises from U.S. national authority, echoed by statements emanating from the ruling circles of the coalition's Arab states, have explicitly assured the Arab world that the present U.S. ground force presence in the Gulf is inherently temporary in nature. Any appearance that the U.S. or the GCC states had decided to back away from those assurances would have widespread repercussions throughout the Middle East.

Further, an overt U.S. alliance with the GCC could lead to a renewal of superpower competition in a region that has long been strategically important to the Soviet Union. One need only look to the roots of the Iran-Iraq arms race resulting from superpower rivalry in the 1970s to see the potential impact that a resurgence of that rivalry could bring.

Finally, it is not apparent that it serves U.S. interests to be placed in a position that requires commitment of U.S.

national power no matter what the issue. While this paper has argued that the issues facing the GCC ought to receive priority U.S. concern, it is equally apparent that all potential sources of conflict do not warrant automatic response.

Examples that come to mind range from an eruption of the now latent border dispute between Saudi Arabia and Yemen and embroilment in a direct confrontation between Israel and one of the GCC states, say Saudi Arabia. While it is in the U.S. interest to go to considerable political measures to prevent these type of crises from developing, the commitment of forces to such crises would likely to work against our long term interests. An Arab-Israeli confrontation, for example, would place in direct conflict our interest in maintaining Israel's sovereignty and in meeting our commitment to GCC security.

Option 3: Collective Security Overtly Backed by U.S. Forces

Between the alternatives discussed above, the United States may pursue several initiatives that address present shortfalls while avoiding the pitfalls identified in each. The following will address elements of policy available to U.S. planners that attempt to navigate this middle ground.

Collective Security: Ground Component

The deterrent value of the existing security structure, limited GCC forces present near the head of the Gulf with the implicit backing of the United States, has been demonstrated to be inadequate. Since the beginning of the Kuwait crisis, there have been a number of discussions involving coalition Arab

states, Iran, and the United States. These point toward development of an consensus that would support creation of a new alignment of Arab states to guarantee the security of the Gulf.

A salient aspect of this emerging consensus calls for the reliance upon the ground combat forces of other Arab states, particularly Egypt and perhaps Syria, to bolster the GCC's existing force. The predominantly Arab approach implicitly limits the U.S. ground combat role and is in concert with the phased removal of U.S. ground combat forces as regional stability is restored. As the most visible element of a security arrangement, a focus on Arab ground combat elements harmonizes regional concerns and U.S. preferences.

Collective Security: Air and Naval Components

While Washington and Arab coalition members agree on eventual removal of U.S. ground combat forces, increased air and naval presence is perhaps another matter. Given the substantive boost to deterrence that an overt U.S. role in the area would provide, it seems prudent from a United States perspective to thoughtfully expand the naval and/or air components of its pre-August 1990 presence. This would add U.S. muscle to a policy of deterrence without the drawbacks of a formal alliance or reneging on promises made during the Desert Shield buildup.

The low profile of naval forces facilitates regional acceptance of this type of direct U.S. role. An increase in the number of combatants routinely operating in the Persian Gulf and its Indian Ocean approaches would reinforce the combat power immediately available to face potential threats. This presence

could later be increased or decreased as a function of regional tensions.

The effectiveness of air power in the early stages of Desert Storm graphically demonstrated the value of land-based air. Given the demanding logistic requirements of sustained operations from an austere base, air bases in the GCC region would facilitate the rapid build up of air combat power should an emergency develop. A low profile scheme that includes support capabilities at locations spread throughout the GCC would contribute directly to deterrence. While some naval proponents argue that sea-based air offers the same capability, the inherent expansibility provided by regional bases and increased deterrent value of visible, in-place power projection forces are advantages to a ground-based alternative.

Despite reluctance on the part of the GCC to consider similar initiatives in the recent past, a limited increase of U.S. presence is not likely to fuel resurgent concerns. This is particularly true if the proposal is initially framed within a short term requirement, say two to three years. Bases developed and occupied would be a clear indication of U.S. resolve.

With the end of the Cold War, U.S. Armed Forces will find themselves headed toward a 25% cut from force levels experienced in FY90. This will place increasing pressure on the force structure that remains to accomplish a range of missions not materially reduced from requirements of the past. Overseas presence will be scrutinized in particular for possible budget shaving reductions. Nevertheless, there will remain potential

flash points around the globe that require a military presence to insure against development of a crisis to which the U.S. is ill prepared to respond. The Persian Gulf is one potential contingency area worthy of special consideration in a period of limited means.

Interoperability: U.S.- GCC Joint Exercises

Given the success of the recent joint U.S.- GCC operation against Iraq, now would seem to be an opportune time to expand upon direct linkages between the GCC and U.S. contingency planners. Periodic, perhaps annual, joint exercises would bring U.S. forces into theater to work through interoperability and command and control issues. These actions would contribute measurably to both deterrence and warfighting capabilities. The precedence of similar exercises with Egypt and Oman in the 1980s coupled with the successes of Desert Storm would seem to provide an ample basis for such an initiative.

Prepositioning of Equipment

The intensive logistic effort that led to Desert Storm success was facilitated in large part by an extended period for force build-up. A logical extension of requirements for air bases is the prepositioning of U.S. ground combat material and equipment, perhaps in the form of a division POMCUS set. Advantages of a ground-based vis-a-vis a sea-based approach are clear: relatively low cost and ease of maintenance.

The disadvantages are primarily political. If maintained in Saudi Arabia, for example, use of this equipment would be

dependent upon prior consultation with Saudi Arabia. Therefore, the equipment would not be available for a full range of contingencies. The presence of this equipment would also add fuel to local political concerns and may, in some eyes, pose an indirect threat to the security of Israel. A costly but more flexible solution would be a floating POMCUS. Whichever solution is determined to be most effective, it seems clear that the extensive deployment of combat materiel into Saudi Arabia offers a unique opportunity for prepositioning of combat equipment. This is particularly true, given the likelihood that several division-sized units will stand down upon redeployment.

Foreign Military Sales: Conventional Defensive Arms

From the U.S. perspective, it in our interest to have the majority of the security requirement fall to GCC states. In order to continue the path to increased military capability, a judicious increase in modern military systems available to GCC states should be pursued. Concerns about Israeli security notwithstanding, it is in our interest to nurture our relationship with the nations of the GCC and our commitment to their defensive capabilities. The apparent large surplus of equipment in Saudi Arabia offers a convenient opportunity to substantially increase GCC land defensive capability.

Political Initiatives

Politically, a number of initiatives have surfaced concerning the long-term stability of the Gulf. For example, in February 1991, the eight Arab members of the coalition against

Iraq proposed a five point program designed to address the regional security shortfall. The proposal called for creation of an Arab peacekeeping force, establishment of a regional development fund, the reaffirmation of support for Palestinian self-determination within an independent state, and a proposal to limit the deployment of weapons of mass destruction.[38]

Other proposals concerning creation of a security framework have surfaced, with predominant emphasis on integration of Egypt and GCC military capabilities. There has even been a suggestion emanating from the GCC summit in December 1990 that Iran could assume a constructive role in Gulf collective security.

It is in the U.S. interest to participate actively in exploring such initiatives, in an effort to work toward the regional consensus and to demonstrate continued U.S. resolve to work constructively toward regional stability. The framework proposed by the GCC parallels the major elements of U.S. policy as outlined by Secretary of State Baker on 7 February 1991 concerning long-term U.S. objectives in the Middle East.[39]

While these and other proposals have yet to be developed in detail, they present opportunities for the coalition partners to maintain momentum existing after the success against Iraq by addressing issues of instability that work against everyone's long-term interests.

Areas which call for specific U.S. diplomatic attention are arms control and the Arab-Israeli conflict. The linkage of these issues is clear, particularly with respect to weapons of mass destruction. In the near term, an effective arms embargo

should prevent the rapid restoration of Iraq's offensive military capability. In the longer term, development of an arms control regime, focusing on nuclear and chemical/biological weapons and sophisticated means of delivery, should become a top U.S. policy objective. While there is ample reason for pessimism because of the present impasse in Palestine and the lucrative nature of the international arms business, there does not appear to be a reasonable alternative available but to pursue the elimination of these impediments to regional stability. U.S. inaction merely allows frustrations to fester and intransigent regional leaders to set the discussion agenda.

Finally, the U.S. should actively encourage the reconstructtion of regional economies devastated by Iraqi expansionism. The redistribution of wealth between those nations who produce oil and those who do not can make an important contribution to regional stability. Present Arab initiatives appear to focus on those states who actively supported the coalition to the exclusion of those who did not. The U.S. should convince regional leaders that it is in everyone's best interest to actively work toward the re-integration of states such as Iraq and Jordan into the regional economic framework. Failure to come to a accommodation with such states cannot fail but to perpetuate the present ill feelings and promote future conflict.

U.S. POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

It should be clear after the discussion above that the approach outlined under Option 3 represents the best opportunity for success. Recognizing the potential that involvement risks entanglement in issues of peripheral interest, potential costs and vital U.S. interests argue for an active approach that directly addresses United States concerns. The first two options are either to wait for crises to develop, reacting to the situation that develops, or to become automatically embroiled in a full range of events that may be of peripheral to U.S. interests.

Option 3 stops short of casting the United States in the "policeman of the Gulf" role. Instead, it argues for an active engagement in the issues of the Gulf, to include a more visible commitment to contribute to the collective security equation. The great successes of the coalition's determined stand against Iraqi aggression has set the stage for a concerted approach toward collective security. The United States finds itself appropriately engaged in the dynamics of the Gulf, and uniquely able to influence the outcome.

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